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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL/IRF

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [VM](#)  
SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: MPS VICE MINISTER PLEDGES  
CONTINUED PROGRESS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Jon Aloisi per 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Summary: On September 29 meeting, Vice Minister of Public Security Nguyen Van Huong pledged continued progress in the area of religious freedom and described his own efforts to personally instruct security officials in northern Vietnam to promote greater religious freedom and not interfere with religious activities. The GVN is committed to further positive developments in this area, VM Huong stressed. VM Huong highlighted recent public statements by State President Triet, which he held provide a top-level confirmation of the GVN's commitment to religious freedom. End Summary.

12. (C) During a September 29 meeting with the Charge (other issues septel), Vice Minister of Public Security Nguyen Van Huong underlined that Vietnam's policies in the area of religious freedom are and will continue to be very "progressive." In terms of recent significant steps forward, State President Nguyen Minh Triet met with Vietnam's Episcopal Council September 28 (septel) to underline Vietnam's commitment to religious freedom and encourage religious groups to play a strong role in Vietnam's ongoing socio-economic development.

13. (C) Furthermore, VM Huong himself chaired a recent meeting of security officials from the provinces of northwestern Vietnam in which he stressed their role in promoting and guaranteeing religious freedom, he continued. In fact, "I instructed them to grant more religious freedom and not interfere in religious activities," the Vice Minister related. MPS works closely with the Committee on Religious Affairs to ensure that provincial and lower-level authorities are strengthening religious freedom. This is an important matter for the GVN; "there is no way that the United States could be more interested in this issue than Vietnam, because these are Vietnam's people," Huong observed. Nevertheless, because Protestantism is a relatively new religion in Vietnam, it will take time for local officials to fully understand it, he concluded.

14. (C) Comment: VM Huong's statements, and recent public statements and actions, are clearly designed to help convince the USG to lift CPC status. We note in particular in this regard the repeated assurances -- from MFA, the CRA and now MPS -- that reforms will continue. End Comment.  
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